CITADEL

Securing Europe's future through green and digital transitions

Resilient and secure Europe:

Advancing security through green and digital transitions

Open Call 1 presentation

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What is CITADEL?

CITADEL is a European cluster-driven initiative designed to support and accelerate SME-led innovation in the civil security sector by connecting innovation supply with real market demand.

Ecosystem networking and matchmaking	**Structured open calls with cascade funding**	Monitoring and acceleration of selected innovation projects

The project aims to accelerate the adoption of innovative security solutions across Europe.

Starting date: 1 October 2025
Duration: 36 months
Funding program: Single Market Programme, Euroclusters

CITADEL: Vision, Mission and Strategy

Mission

- ✓ To support innovation, networking and adoption of new processes and advanced technologies on the security value chain

Vision

- ✓ To reinforce the resilience of European critical infrastructures facing emerging threats, by leveraging the synergies between digital and green transitions

Strategic objectives (implemented through cascade funding)

- ✓ Stimulate collaborations between digital companies and the security sector
- ✓ Accelerate the adoption of innovative digital technologies in the security sector
- ✓ Improve the resilience of European critical infrastructures
- ✓ Facilitate access to security markets for innovative SMEs

CITADEL consortium

CITADEL is implemented by a consortium of six specialised European clusters from France, Lithuania, Romania and Finland, covering digital technologies, security and innovation ecosystems across Europe.

- Strong regional anchoring
- Complementary expertise across the security value chain
- Wide European outreach

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I° CITADEL Open Call 1 presentation

Cascade funding in CITADEL: funding mechanism to accelerate security innovation across Europe

1,98 M€ total budget — **2** open calls — **33** funded projects — **60 k€** per project — **2** partners per funded project

Funding mechanism

- Funding of 9-month demonstration / pilot projects
- Each funded project will receive **60 000 €** as a **lump sum**
- Funding to be **shared among the SME** partners of the same project
- Co-financing from private sources of **at least 20%**
- **Eligible countries** : EU-27 + associated countries to SMP
- **2 successive Open Calls**
- Transparent and fair **selection**

Collaboration rules

- **Collaborative projects** among tech-savy companies (SMEs from digital sector) and more traditional companies (security sector)
- **Demonstration** of a digital solution in real or near-real conditions fitting with a security use case/challenge
- **2 partners per project :**
  - One SME company from digital sector
  - One entity representing the demand side (security sector)

Who are we looking for ?

- Consortium of **2 partners**: **1 digital/tech SME + 1 security end-user (SME or non-SME)**
- Established in EU Member States and Single Market Programme associated countries
  - ✓ *EU-27 member states + Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Moldova, Ukraine*
- **Cross-border partnerships encouraged (1 point of bonus)**
- **Only SMEs are eligible to receive funding**
- Co-financing needed from private sources of **at least 20% and covered either by the SME's own financial resources (equity capital) or by guaranteed external financing**. It cannot consist of contributions in kind, personnel costs, or non-monetary contributions.

What are we looking for ?

CITADEL Open Call 1

Selection of 17 SME-led innovation projects contributing to:

- **Technological innovation**: demonstrate and validate advanced security solutions (AI, IoT, photonics, cybersecurity, communication), accelerating uptake and deployment

TRL 5 / 6 → *Mini. +1* → TRL 6 / 7 +

- **Operational and security benefits**: Improve threat detection, resilience of critical infrastructures, emergency response, and safety in urban environments, including crowd and large-event management.
- **Economic and market impact**: Support faster commercialisation, create new business opportunities, and strengthen competitiveness of European security companies
- **Societal and policy impact**: Enhance public trust, support the green and digital transition, and inform security policy and standardisation.
- **Knowledge and learning:** Generate lessons learned, best practices, and insights to guide replication, R&D, and innovation strategies.

Technologies

IoT

- ✓ Smart sensors
- ✓ Edge AI
- ✓ Environmental monitoring
- ✓ Risk detection

Photonics & optics

- ✓ Computer vision
- ✓ Advanced robotics
- ✓ Smart optical sensors
- ✓ Image recognition

AI and data analytics

- ✓ Predictive analytics
- ✓ Decision support
- ✓ Digital twins
- ✓ Risk prediction (big data)

Cybersecurity

- ✓ Threat detection
- ✓ Attack prevention
- ✓ Blockchain for secure data
- ✓ Infrastructure protection

Connectivity

- ✓ Cloud platforms
- ✓ Secure communication
- ✓ Emergency response
- ✓ Protected data exchange

Security value chain challenges

Critical infrastructures
- ✓ Energy
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Transport
- ✓ Healthcare
- ✓ Digital infra

Resilience
- ✓ Natural disaster
- ✓ Green transition
- ✓ Technological risks
- ✓ Service continuity in case of crisis

Urban environment
- ✓ Smart cities
- ✓ Sustainability
- ✓ Green transition linkage
- ✓ Large events

Risk assessment > **Prevention** > **Detection** > **Response** > **Recovery**

Risk assessment
Identification and evaluation of potential threats and vulnerabilities

Prevention
Measures to mitigate risks and protect against identified threats

Detection
Systems for monitoring and identifying security incidents in real-time

Response
Immediate actions to address and contain security incidents

Recovery
Restoration of systems and business continuity after incidents

CITADEL financial support

- **Up to 60 000 € per selected project**
- **Only SME** can be funded
- Grant, lump sum
- Funding rate: **maximum 80%**

- Budget form requested at application stage for both partners

- Maximum project duration = **9 months**
- Expected start: 01/10/2026 at latest
- Latest ending: 30/06/2027

- Payment calendar:
  - Up to **20%** at project start (after subgrant agreement signature)
  - Up to 80% at project closure, after validation of the project by CITADEL consortium

CITADEL open call: eligibility conditions

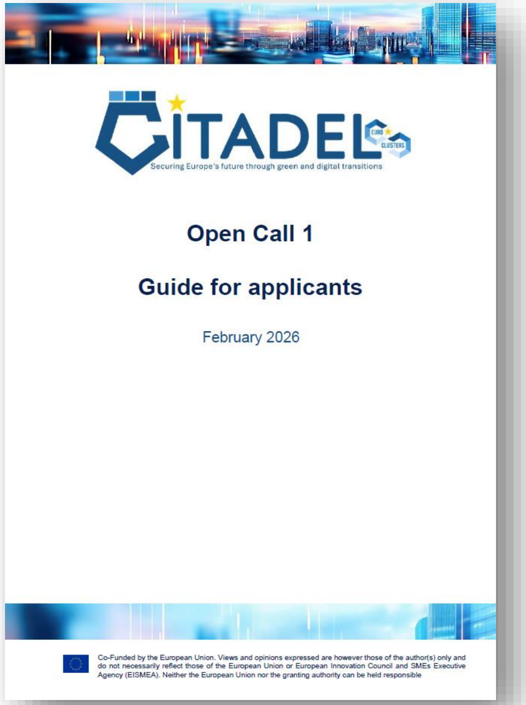
- ✓ Applicants are legal entities from eligible countries.
- ✓ Consortium of 2 legal entities, independant from each other.
- ✓ Partner 1 if a for-profit digital / tech SME. Partner 2 is a security end-user.
- ✓ Applications are submitted before the deadline.
- ✓ Applications are complete and in English.
- ✓ Only 1 application per applicant. If more than one proposal is identified, only the last proposal which has been submitted will be evaluated.
- ✓ SME must be in good financial health (not under liquidation nor in difficulty).

CITADEL Open Call 1: how to apply

Deadline
5 May 2026 – 17:00 CEST

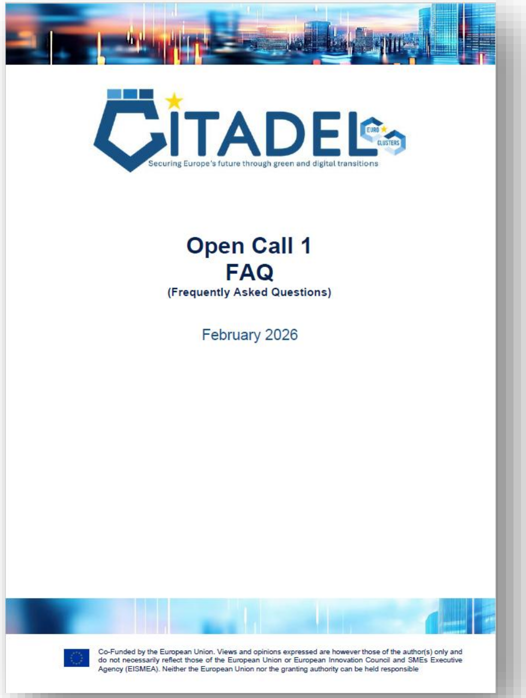
Documents

- *Guide for applicants*
- *FAQ*
- *Template*

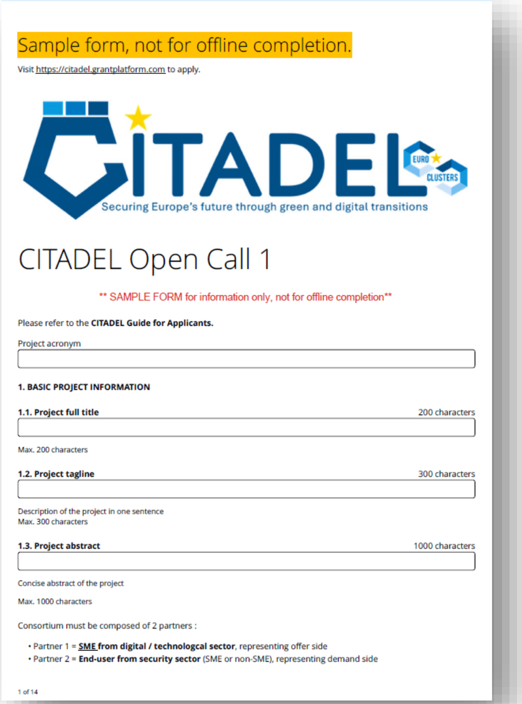

Open Call 1

Guide for applicants

February 2026


Open Call 1
FAQ
(Frequently Asked Questions)

February 2026


Sample form, not for offline completion.

Visit https://citadel.grantplatform.com to apply.

CITADEL Open Call 1

** SAMPLE FORM for information only, not for offline completion**

Please refer to the **CITADEL Guide for Applicants.**

Project acronym

1. BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

1.1. Project full title 200 characters

Max. 200 characters

1.2. Project tagline 300 characters

Description of the project in one sentence
Max. 300 characters

1.3. Project abstract 1000 characters

Concise abstract of the project

Max. 1000 characters

Consortium must be composed of 2 partners :

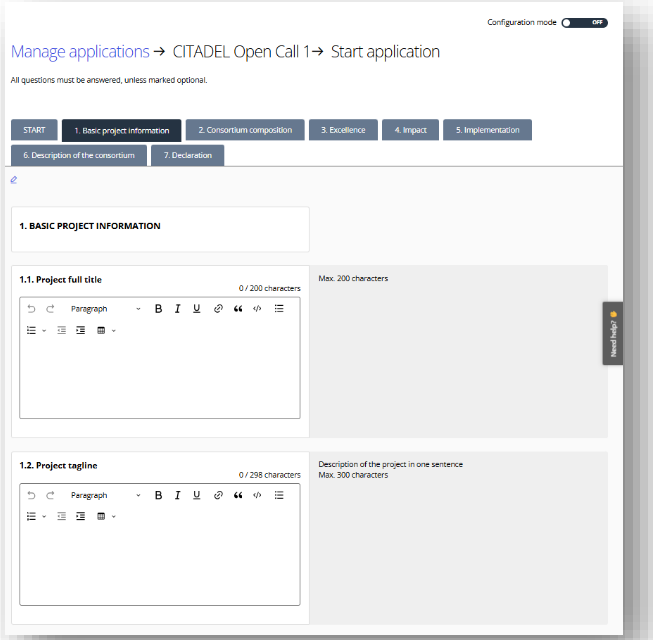
- Partner 1 = **SME from digital / technologcal sector**, representing offer side
- Partner 2 = **End-user from security sector** (SME or non-SME), representing demand side

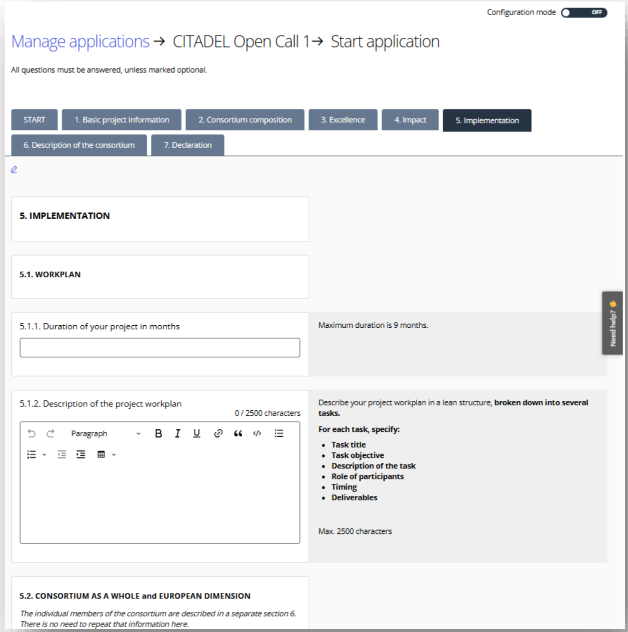
1 of 14

CITADEL Open Call 1: how to apply

Deadline
5 May 2026 – 17:00 CEST

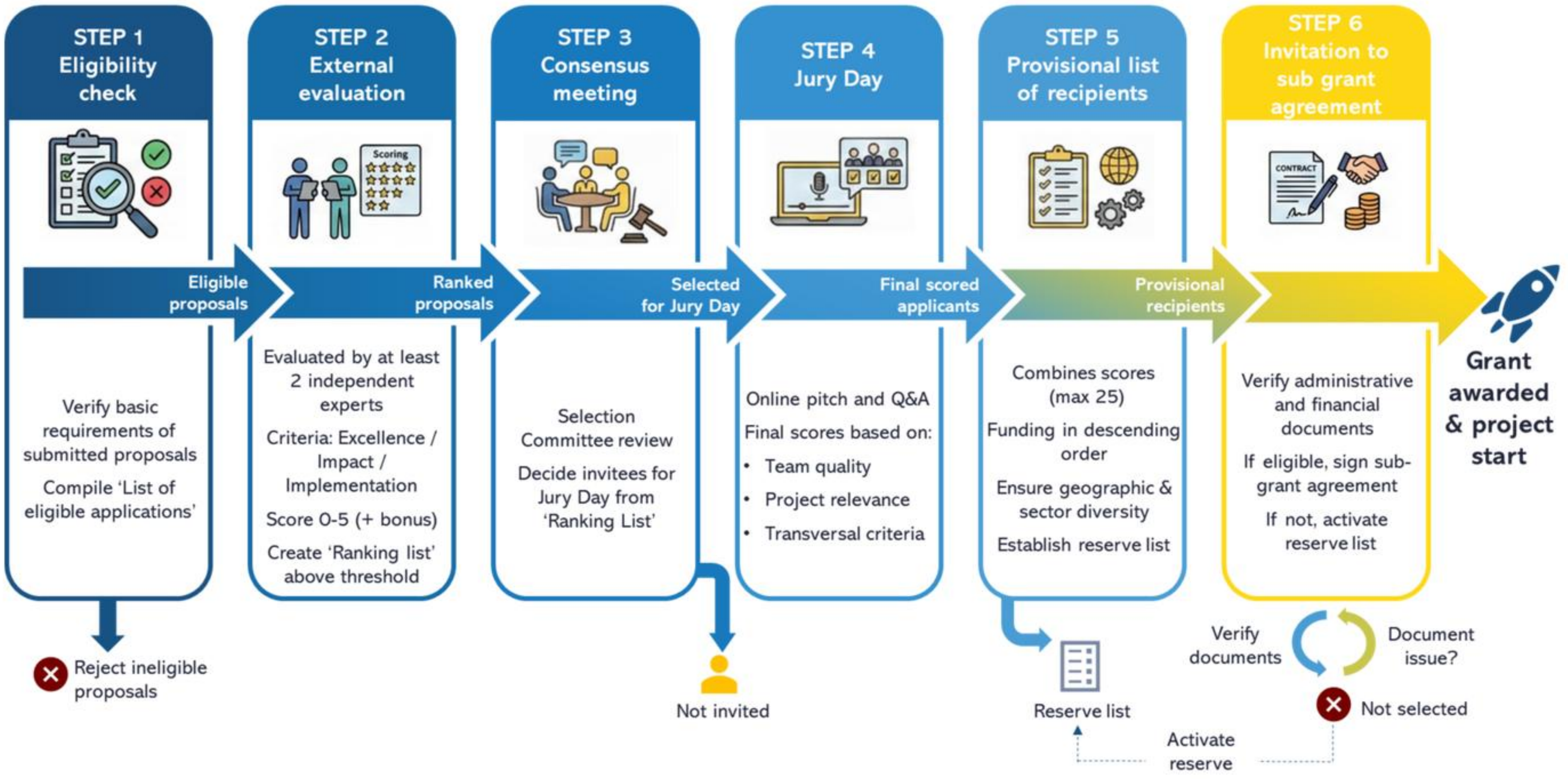
- Application form on https://citadel.grantplatform.com/





II° Evaluation and selection processes

Evaluation and selection processes



Evaluation criteria and scoring

Each application will be evaluated by at least 2 external and independent experts.

Scores from 0 to 5

Threshold 3/5 on each criteria + 10/15 on the total

EXCELLENCE (. / 5)

IMPACT (. / 5)

IMPLEMENTATION (. / 5)

+ 1 extra bonus point in case the 2 partners are from 2 different countries

Final step: Jury Day

- Pre-selected applicants will be invited to an **online** Jury Day that is foreseen on **15 – 16 – 17 June 2026**.
- Participation of at least one consortium member from the shortlisted applicants will be mandatory.
- **Pitch of the pre-selected projects in front of the CITADEL Jury** composed of the CITADEL Selection Committee Members.

+ Q/A session with the Jury.

- Final selection based on:

Quality of the team
/ 4 points

Matching with CITADEL objectives
/ 4 points

Transversal criteria
(environmental impact, low carbon, equap opp.)
/ 1 point

Final ranking list
(score from external evaluation + score from jury day)

17 projects invited for sub grant agreement preparation
(+ reserve list)

Timeline

17 projects

Open call 1 timeline

Call opening *Publicatio*	24 February 2026
Deadline of the CITADEL Call 1	**5 May 2026 at 17:00 CEST**
Evaluation and Online Jury Day (15-17 June 2026) *Review and scoring of applications by expert evaluators + jury day*	5 May – 17 June 2026
Selection *Final decision on projects to be funded*	18 June 2026
Granting *Contract signing and prefunding*	**July - September 2026**
Implementation and monitoring *Project tracking, reporting and support*	1st October 2026 – 30 June 2027
Closing *Final reporting, impact and final payment*	July 2027

Conclusion and Q&A

Thank you for your attention!

CITADEL Euroclusters project

@EC_CITADEL

Website :
https://profile.clustercollaboration.eu/profile/cluster-partnership-initiative/78b45df8-516c-4375-bf45-3a571ac2210a

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